

# Meridian Fire Department

## Bureau of Fire Prevention

### FIRE SAFETY FACT SHEET: Carbon Monoxide

**What You Can't See, Can't Taste, Can't Smell-CAN KILL YOU!!** According to the United States Fire Administration (USFA) each year in America, **Carbon Monoxide (CO) poisoning** claims the lives of **over 185 people** and sends **another 10,000 people** to hospitals and emergency rooms for treatment. **CO is a colorless, tasteless, odorless, and toxic gas.** Due to the fact that you can be totally unaware that CO is present it can kill you before you know something is wrong. Here is some information that can help to protect yourself and your loved ones from Carbon Monoxide fumes.

**Carbon Monoxide is produced by:** the incomplete burning of fossil fuels such as oil, coal, or gasoline. CO is also produced by the incomplete burning of wood, paper, and other combustibles.

**How Does Carbon Monoxide (CO) kill you?** Carbon Monoxide is one atom of Carbon and one atom of Oxygen. CO wants to be CO<sub>2</sub> (Carbon Dioxide) so badly that when it gets in your bloodstream it turns the Oxygen that you need to live into CO<sub>2</sub>. The CO absorbs all of the available Oxygen in your blood and causes you to suffocate and die.

**CO Gas is generated by several sources:** gas-fired appliances, charcoal grills, wood burning furnaces, fire places, and motor vehicles powered by fossil fuels. Electric heaters, electric water heaters, and battery/ electric powered vehicles do not produce CO. If you have appliances that are powered by combustible agents such as Natural Gas or wood maintain them regularly.

**Dangerous Amounts of CO can accumulate** when, as a result of poor installation, poor maintenance, failure, or damage to an appliance that is in service does not allow proper burning. This situation along with a poorly ventilated room that does not permit a sufficient amount of Carbon Monoxide to escape can result in a toxic and ultimately lethal environment.

**No Smell, No Taste, No Color-**for the reasons that I have just listed **Carbon Monoxide (CO) detectors** are the only way to alert you to increasingly dangerous levels of CO before tragedy strikes.

**When your CO Detector goes off take corrective action:** 3-Basic Steps Evacuate> Ventilate> Investigate. 1) Move to fresh air and call 911, when the Fire Department arrives let them> 2) ventilate the area> and 3) investigate the source of CO.

Everyone Comes Home